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Norway's accused spy diplomat a man of wide, varied experience

By Miles Cunningham
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Arne Treholt is described by a fellow Norwegian diplomat as a man "absolutely suited for multilateral diplomacy."

Whatever the outcome of his trial, scheduled to last for the next six weeks in Oslo, it is clear that Mr. Treholt also was uniquely qualified to be a spy.

Kari Sporaekre, a freelance television journalist in Norway and Mr. Treholt's second wife, has written a book about her life with the alleged spy: "Bon Voyage to Paris."

The irony of the title is that, when he spoke those words, Mr. Treholt was on his way to Vienna to meet with KGB agents, according to Norwegian authorities.

Mr. Treholt apparently has admitted certain indiscretions. But there is considerable confusion as to what else he has confessed since he was arrested, carrying classified documents Jan. 20, 1984, at Fornebu Airport in Oslo.

"That is disputed," said a source who has followed the case. "It was in the official statement by the

attorney general's office that he had confessed to being on his way and things like that. And so now the question is how much was there in his confession."

Mr. Treholt, 42, is tall, slender, handsome, once blonde but now mostly gray haired and has blue eyes. A sports enthusiast, he generally is in excellent physical condition.

When a counselor to the Norwegian mission to the United Nations in 1979-82, Mr. Treholt was a runner. "Three or four times he was in the New York Marathon and really did well," said the source.

Mr. Treholt reportedly was under surveillance by then, suspected of espionage.

He came from a part of Norway that produces great speed skaters, and speed skating was one of his interests. In Norway, he owned a race horse. And in New York, he enjoyed the track.

His father, Torstein Treholt, was a longtime member of Parliament and a former minister of agriculture.

Arne Treholt studied economics, political history and social sciences at the University of Oslo in the

mid-1960s without obtaining a degree.

He taught school in that period, and, in 1966-71, Mr. Treholt was a journalist with Arbeiderbladet, the principal daily newspaper of the Norwegian Labor Party.

International affairs, particularly Greece, became one of Mr. Treholt's major interests. He is said to be close to Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu, who has exasperated the Reagan administration more than once, and Minister of Culture and Science Melina Mercouri.

Mr. Treholt left the newspaper business and went to work at the Norwegian Institute on Foreign Policy in Oslo as a research assistant. He then was sent to the foreign ministry's foreign service school.

Mr. Treholt's career apparently prospered. In the mid-1970s, he became personal secretary to the minister for trade and moved with that minister when he became the chief for sea law.

Of one disappointing series of fishing zone talks with the Soviets, the Norwegians — apparently with Mr. Treholt in mind — said in retrospect that the Russians had been

represented on both sides of the negotiating table.

In 1982, even though suspected by then of being a spy, Mr. Treholt was sent to Norway's defense college and there obtained access to classified material including critical NATO data.

Only three weeks before his arrest, he was named chief of the foreign ministry press office. And the day before his arrest, he arranged a news conference in Oslo with United States Secretary of State George P. Shultz.

In Norway, the trial is a sensation.

Mr. Treholt's letters from prison to his 6-year-old son have been published, as well as his wife's book.

He is remembered by a fellow journalist as an avid reader — but always of newspapers and periodicals, never books.

"He was absolutely suited for that job," said the source. "He made contact with people. He was very well-informed. He knew what was going on; he knew what was in the cards."